



Musina - Makhado Special Economic Zone (MMSEZ) could be an Economic Game Changer in Africa

On Thursday, 16 September 2021, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) in collaboration with MMSEZ, hosted a Smart City Model Symposium. This was a hybrid symposium which took place at the University's Research Conference Centre and on Microsoft Teams. The symposium attracted speakers from both local and international. The symposium was followed by a Networking Gala Dinner that took place at 2Ten Hotel, Sibasa.

The Smart City Model was inspired by the need to promote a new city development model based on the following principles: Smart Economy; Smart Environment; Smart Governance; Smart Living; Smart Mobility and Fourth Industrial Revolution.



In his welcome address, UNIVEN Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni highlighted that the University is indeed honoured to be hosting this important symposium to launch the Musina - Makhado Special Economic Zone Smart City model. He said that this symposium, thus propels UNIVEN towards 'A University leading in engaged scholarship' - which is how UNIVEN's vision is captured and with a mission as "The University of Venda that produces graduates that are locally relevant and globally competitive."

Dr Nthambeleni continued to say that the theme for this symposium resonates with UNIVEN's vision, mission, and values. "This symposium provides a unique opportunity for all of us because of its scope; as it has attracted delegates from all over the world; people with wide-ranging knowledge on the issue of smart cities." Following several years of bilateral co-operations and sharing of experiences, we are pleased that our engagements culminated in a formalised collaboration in the form of a five-year Memorandum of Understanding signed between the University of Venda and Musina Makhado Special Economic Zone.

The Memorandum of Understanding as it were, enjoins the two parties to "collaborate in undertaking research, scholarly and commercial initiatives for mutual benefit. The University of Venda has, through this Memorandum of Understanding, committed to use its capabilities and expertise to support the roll out of the Musina Makhado Special Economic Zone."

He mentioned that UNIVEN appreciates the responsibility and the recognition of the role of universities, science councils in developments like these and in particular the role of the University of Venda. "Universities are not just ivory towers that produces knowledge for their sake. They are the oil that propels the engines of growth. The knowledge economy or what we are calling the 4th industrial revolution, is indeed upon us and we have to adapt and maximise on the opportunities brought by it or else we will be left behind."

He highlighted that UNIVEN's participation in the Musina Makhado Special Economic Zone is therefore an opportune moment for the University to play a crucial role in the development of its surroundings. "This places us as a University in a position where we can be part of the intellectual discourse about the kinds of cities we envisage and gives us the opportunity to contribute to the redesigning and remaking of a new South Africa we all want. We are encouraged by the consultative processes that Musina Makhado Special Economic Zone has embraced to date."



In his opening address, MMSEZ CEO, Mr Lehlogonolo Masoga thanked UNIVEN for its contribution and commitment in assisting to build MMSEZ. He said this is the time for all stakeholders to contribute, change Limpopo Province in to being the Limpopo we all dreamt about.



As the keynote speaker, UNDP Resident Representative, Dr Ayodele Odusola speaking under the theme 'Africa continental free trade agreement, implications for regional economic integration' said the MMSEZ is going to be a game changer, not only for South Africa but for the rest of Africa. "This will mark the end of importing commodities from European countries and from other continents. This project will also create jobs for African youth and assist in the fight against poverty." He advised all Africans to nurture this project until it can fully operate on its own and explained this project as a very good opportunity to boost the African economy because African countries will be doing business with each other than doing business with countries outside Africa.



Cllr Matshete gave a message of support, representing the Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Cllr Dowelani Nenguda. She said the development of the MMSEZ has already commenced. She called on government institutions to respond when called to assist in this MMSEZ project because this will improve the lives of most people in Limpopo province.

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Representing Limpopo Premier, Stanley Chupu Mathabatha, Mr Dickson Masemola said UNIVEN continues to play a big role as a partner to develop Limpopo Province. "We are really indebted by the role that the University of Venda has and is still playing for the development of our communities, and we are confident that through this kind of partnership, this project will be a success."

He said this development will indeed become a game changer that will create jobs for the livelihood of many people, particularly, the people of Limpopo. "Through this project we will Marshall every effort to building the Limpopo that we all want. This is the opportunity to eradicate poverty and unemployment in our province. We hope to create the much-needed employment opportunities through MMSEZ."



When unveiling the MMSEZ Smart City Model, Dr Mofasi Lekota, MMSEZ Board Chairperson said as the Board, they will not allow this project to fail. "We believe that with the good plan and proper implementation we will never fail." Mr Lekota appreciated UNIVEN for this partnership and indicated that UNIVEN has shown its impact and commitment in this project. "Being relative and being situational requires commitment. At some point, Johannesburg was once a smart city, and it has grown to what it is today. Even what we are about to start here, will grow to what we want to see in many years to come. This is a long-term project."



The unveiling of the MMSEZ Smart City Model was followed by the Smart City Panel, led by the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Prof Ntebogeng Mokgalaka- Fleischmann. Speakers for this panel were Prof Tshilidzi Marwala, the University of Johannesburg Vice-Chancellor who spoke about 4th Industrial Revolution; Dr Lucienne Abrahams from University of Witwatersrand spoke about innovation and Smart Cities; Dr Jethro Zuwarimwe from UNIVEN presented about bringing villages into the smart region.



Dr James Chakwizira from UNIVEN moderated the second session where Mr Casper Badenhorst from Maswana Group presented about Regional Spatial Development Framework.



The Co-Creation Panel was moderated by Dr Tshilidzi Ratshitanga. Presenters of this panel were Dr Ajith Gobal from CSIR who presented about advanced manufacturing within an economic industrial park; Dr David Tinarwo from UNIVEN presented about Biogas Energy pilot in villages; Prof Kelvin Anoh from University of Bolton in the United Kingdom presented about Smart Energy Cities; Dr Eric Maluta from UNIVEN presented about Solar Energy Project at Vuwani Science Resource Centre while Prof Modimowabarwa Kanyane from UNIVEN presented about collaborative project on smart villages.



In his closing remarks Mr Thabo Mokone, MEC for Limpopo Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET) said as Limpopo government, they have the responsibility to make this MMSEZ project not to fail. "This project will change the lives of many South Africans and people in the SADC region. The Provincial cabinet has approved the implementation of this project and we believe that this smart city will happen in our lifetime".

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This symposium was concluded with a symbolic signing of the Memorandum of Understanding at a gala dinner that was held at 2Ten Hotel in the evening of Thursday, 16 September 2021.



Senior members from both UNIVEN and MMSEZ witnessing the signing of MoU.



Group photo taken during the Symposium



Group photo taken during the Symposium



Group photo taken during the Symposium

UNIVEN partners with stakeholders and launches Integrated Education and Security Awareness Campaign

On Wednesday, 08 September 2021, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) in partnership with Thohoyandou SAPS, and the South African National Department of Social Development launched Integrated Education and Security Awareness Campaign. The purpose of this Awareness Campaign was to educate students about safety measures that they should take during crisis and to educate them about the dangers and disadvantages of being on the wrong side of the Law. The official launch of this awareness campaign took place at the University's Research Conference Centre.



When Officially Launching the Awareness Campaign, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Corporate Services, Dr Robert Martin said this partnership has come at the right time when UNIVEN has just launched the new Strategic Plan 2021-2025. He told partnering organisations, the Student Representative Council and UNIVEN Policing Forum that it is indeed a pleasure to see strategies of this University culminating. "It is also a pleasure to see the University partnering with stakeholders to ensure the success of security awareness campaign. We encourage you to work hard in your respective areas and while working hard, avoid being infected by COVID-19." He said this commitment of all partnering stakeholders will help our area to be a crime free area, especially in our institution.

Dr Martin said that this Integrated Education and Security Awareness Campaign seeks to prevent incidence such as the heart-breaking incidence that happened to Precious Ramabulana who was assaulted, raped, and murdered in her place of residence. "For any parent this experience would be the most painful news to receive. In addition, UNIVEN Integration Masterplan will assist to alleviate crime at the University's On and Off-campus residences. We are pleased to announce high compliance from our Off-Campus residence owners, and this is just the beginning, we will improve from here." He spoke about the reinforcement of the University security system that is already in line with our Integration Masterplan. "CCTV cameras are installed throughout the University. It is much better to prevent crises than to work during crisis. We need to work together if we want to win this challenge."

He appreciated the support that the University has continuously been receiving from Thohoyandou SAPS. He advised Thohoyandou SAPS to frequently engage with students and educate them about crime prevention issues. He also appreciated the assistance that the Department of Social Development is giving the University.

"Let us be proactive than being reactive. As a University we endorse all efforts that solidify safety of our students." He declared the awareness campaign officially launched.



In his welcome address, Director Protection Services, Mr Azwidowi Mukheli said the purpose of this Security Awareness Campaign is to conscientise students about their safety. Mr Mukheli said this will reduce students' vulnerability and reduce gender-based violence incidences in residences.



UNIVEN SRC President, Mr Gift Chauke said as student leaders they welcome this initiative, and hope that this initiative will reduce the high number of crimes happening in our residences. "We also appreciate measures taken by the University and it's partnering stakeholders to fight against crime. We should also agree that some of these criminal activities are caused by poverty and high number of unemployment in the country, there is also a need for government to respond to this challenge by creating jobs. Think about addressing the root causes of these challenges."



Director Social Crime Prevention at the National Department of Social Development, Mr Steven Maselesele, said the wellbeing of students is very important to them because these students are part of the society and communities where we come from. "We are looking forward to having a fruitful experience from this initiative. I admit that some of these crimes are caused by poverty and unemployment, and we should have started this partnership long time ago. Maybe we would be very far by now with the reduced number of crimes. For us to achieve our goals we need to work together, we need each other. We also need to look at how best we can change the thinking or mindsets of people in our communities."

Mr Maselesele advised students not to commit any crime because a criminal record affects their chances of finding jobs. "Let us teach our students to present the best versions of themselves out there because what they do today will affect their future."



Captain Masocha Gabeni from Thohoyandou SAPS said according to their crime statistics, UNIVEN is one of crime hot spots. "We appreciate this initiative, and we will work with the University until we defeat these criminals. UNIVEN should not hesitate to contact us when there is a need to do so." He asked students and staff members to be their eyes and ears and not to wait for things to happen before they report to them. "Be proactive, because our duty is to prevent crime not to make arrests after the damage has happened. We support this initiative, and we are looking forward to working together with the UNIVEN."



Above are pictures of students and delegates at some of the visited off-campus residences.

UNIVEN partners with stakeholders and launches Integrated Education and Security Awareness Campaign continued...



As the Programme Director, Assistant Schools Liaison Officer, Mr Justice Lebopa from the University's Marketing, Branding and Communication Department said it is important for the University to partner with the involved stakeholders because this partnership will assist to fight crime in this area including in student residences.



Director Legal Services, Advocate Eric Nemukula gave a vote of thanks. He thanked all stakeholders and wished for a fruitful Awareness Campaign. "Let us help one another by preaching this gospel of safety and crime prevention with the aim of making our residences a safer home away from home for our students."

From Wednesday, 08 September until Sunday, 12 September 2021, delegates from the National Department of Social Development, Provincial Department of Social Development, Local Office of the Department of Social Development, UNIVEN staff members from the Department of Protection Services, together with representatives from Thohoyandou SAPS, representatives from TEMS 911 Rescue Services, UNIVEN Community Police Forum, UNIVEN Minister of Health, Safety and Security and UNIVEN SRC President visited accredited and non-accredited off-campus residences. Accredited residences that were

visited include Muthathe, Sandton, Simeka Heights, 3MTR, Samvuni and Johannah's Nest. On Saturday, delegates visited non-accredited off-campus residences around Maungani while on Sunday they visited non accredited off-campus residences around P/ West. During these off-campus residence site visits, students were taught about issues around safety tips, bullying, assault, gender-based violence and the consequences of having a criminal record. Students were also given whistles to be used when they are being attacked or when they are in danger. 447 students were reached during this Integrated Education and Security Awareness Campaign.



Above are pictures of students and delegates at some of the visited off-campus residences.

South Africa's 2021 Tree of the Year planted at the Life Sciences Building

On Tuesday, 07 September 2021, members of the Department of Biological Sciences in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture closed the 2021 Arbor Week celebrations by planting the Tree of the Year, *Portulacaria afra* Jacq, (Botanical name) commonly known as Elephant's Food (English), Spekboom (Afrikaans) and Tshilepwete (Venda) is the 2021 Tree of the Year. The tree was planted by the main entrance of the Life Sciences Building in celebration and appreciation of Arbor Week.

The Spekboom was donated to the Department of Biological Sciences by Dzivhanyi Primary School, a local school that is a member of Eco-schools Programme. It is an International Environmental Programme which is managed by Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA). The aim of WESSA is to promote participation in caring for the Earth through

initiation and support of high impact environmental and conservation projects.

Arbor Week in South Africa is annually celebrated on the first week of September. The custodian of forestry, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), encourages the communities to plant indigenous trees in promotion of sustainable management of the environment. This is the time to appreciate the importance of trees in our daily lives as we rehabilitate our environment from anthropogenic activities. Celebrating Arbor Week in September which is Heritage Month gives communities the opportunity to celebrate trees that have become part of their heritage because of their cultural importance. The emphasis is to take care of our trees for us to continue to enjoy their resources, while at the same time protecting them for future generations.



: Department of Biological Sciences staff members and postgraduate students who participated in the tree planting ceremony (Photo supplied)

Information Session provides a platform for Vhembe Biosphere Reserve to share insights with UNIVEN researchers and students

On Wednesday, 08 September 2021 the University of Venda (UNIVEN)'s Faculty of Health Sciences held a Vhembe Biosphere Reserve (VBR) information session on Microsoft Teams. This information session was aimed at providing a platform for VBR to share insights with UNIVEN researchers and students. The information session intended to stimulate continued engagement leading to collaborative grant writing, research, and innovation as well as capacity building initiatives. The theme of this Information session was 'Re-Aligning Research and Education in the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve'.

The Information session was blessed by the presence of the Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni.

In February this year (2021), the University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Vhembe Biosphere Reserve (VBR) to bridge the science – management divide. Bridging of this science – management divide was planned to be achieved through engaged scholarship, whereby co-creation and co-production of knowledge will be a vital element in this partnership.

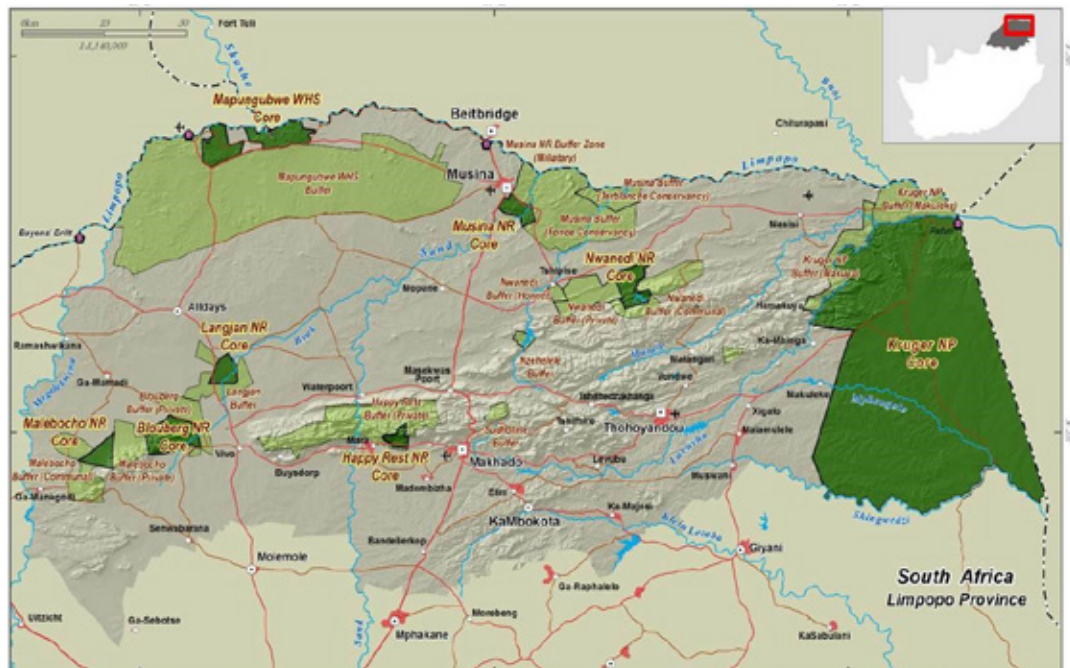


Mr Tonderai Makoni, Programme Coordinator for Vhembe Biosphere Reserve.

In his presentation, the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve Programme Coordinator, Mr Tonderai Makoni explained that the biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development'. He said these are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. "They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges. Each site promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use (UNESCO, 2021)."

Mr Makoni further said that Biosphere Reserves involve local communities and all interested stakeholders in planning and management. The VBR has three main functions which are: Conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity; Economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable and Logistic support, underpinning development through research, monitoring, education, and training.

He explained that the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve is only one of 2 biosphere reserves in the world with a university inside and this is very important in terms of how the VBR can grow. Research is at the core of most of our daily lives and in the case of the VBR, the University of Venda has a huge role to play in the Man and Biosphere Programme.



Map of Vhembe Biosphere Reserve

The objective of the VBR is to apply international principles of conservation and sustainable development. Even if most of the environmental problems are interlinked on a global scale, for many of them, a lot can be done by stakeholders at local level.

This is reflected in the well-known phrase "think globally act locally" that has prevailed in many campaigns to sensitise and empower citizens during the last decades (Scoullas, 2020). UNIVEN research should try to align with some of the objectives and functions of the VBR so that research can be able to solve local problems and inform policy as well.

"There is usually a misconception that biosphere reserves only focus biodiversity conservation, this is far from the truth. The scope of the VBR is much broader and covers various topics from gender mainstreaming, indigenous knowledge, health, rural development, education, law, tourism, transport, youth, media, sport, and many other topics that are affecting our stakeholders. There is a huge potential in the VBR to do research that can help our communities towards sustainable development."

Mr Makoni went on to emphasise that the VBR has a responsibility to promote and support interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research that is relevant to society. The VBR is attractive as a research area because of its focus on applied research, its interdisciplinary data and information pool and the logistical support through administrative bodies. Research results help to make discussions on the local level less emotional and more rational.

"Most importantly to VBR researchers is the international affiliation with UNESCO. This affiliation carries a wealth of international recognition and access to expertise, thereby facilitating the process of requesting funding from international institutions. Given the increased competition for an increasingly limited number of research grants, such

endorsement from UNESCO has considerable added value." Mr Makoni concluded his talk by expressing that, as VBR they want to see a shift from research being done 'in' the biosphere to research being done 'for' the biosphere.

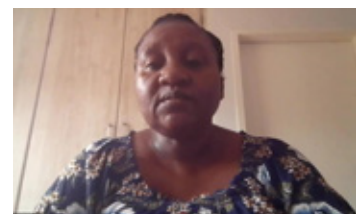
The VBR is located in the most northern districts of the Limpopo Province and includes the northern Kruger National Park north of the Shingwedzi River, and borders the three neighbouring countries of Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Five local municipalities fall within the VBR namely, Collins Chabane, Musina, Thulamela, Makhado and Bloubaai local municipality.

The VBR contains a complex interplay of cultural groups representing a rich, but diverse, cultural heritage. These groups exist in an area of the country with extraordinary biodiversity and several sensitive eco-systems. The biosphere reserve was designated in 2009 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) under the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme.

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When rendering the purpose of the Information Session, Prof Vhonani Netshandama thanked the Faculty of Health Sciences for co-hosting this Webinar. She said UNIVEN is located within the radius of the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve and is one of the two Universities in the world that are located in the biosphere area. She advised staff members to always ensure that our scholarship begins at home. "Let us do introspection on how we can assist our communities."



In her closing remarks, DVC Research and Postgraduate Studies, Prof Nosisi Feza said that the existence of VBR resonates well with the University because the University's Strategic Thrust: 1 is centred around Student Centeredness and Engaged Scholarship. She said through the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve, youth within the surrounding communities will have an opportunity to learn about the importance of VBR which is a good thing because it means that we are entering into the field that had historically excluded our communities.

Adv Nemukula is the newly appointed UNIVEN Director Legal Services



On 01 September 2021, Adv Avhapfani Eric Nemukula assumed his duties as the new Director Legal Services of the University of Venda (UNIVEN). Adv Nemukula has acted as the Director Legal Services for a period of eight months at UNIVEN. He holds LL.M. in

Labour Law from the University of Pretoria, LL.B. from UNIVEN and a Certificate in Higher Education Management from UNIVEN. He expressed that he is happy to join the UNIVEN Senior Management team which is expected to ensure that the University achieves its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. Adv Nemukula continued to say that he knows exactly what is expected of him given the fact that he acted in the position for the past eight months. According to him, his main focal points will be to ensure that the interests of UNIVEN are always legally protected, and to create a harmonious academic environment through the efficient and effective implementation of student discipline.

Adv Nemukula's employment history includes amongst others the following: Acting Director Legal Services (UNIVEN) from January 2021 until he was appointed as the

Director Legal Services and resumed duties at the beginning of September 2021, Head Labour Relations/ Legal Services for UNIVEN from June 2014 to December 2020, Manager Legal Services for Fetakgomo Local Municipality from October 2013 to May 2014, Deputy Manager Labour and Legal Services in the Limpopo Department of Roads and Transport from September 2010 to August 2013, Deputy Manager Legal Services at the Limpopo Department of Local Government and Housing from March 2008 to August 2010, Senior Employee Relations Officer in the Limpopo Department of Health from February 2007 to February 2008. Although he was initially employed by the Department of Correctional Services in February 1996 as a Correctional Officer, he was appointed as Labour Relations and Legal Officer from October 2004 to January 2007. Adv Nemukula has also just been appointed

as the Chairperson of Transversal Committee which is responsible for the review of all UNIVEN institutional policies.

"Looking back from where I am coming from has made me realise that this was not an easy road travelled, however this became possible through commitment and hard work", said Adv Nemukula. I am committed to ensure that the Directorate of Legal Services is compatible with all legal instruments, including the Constitution of the Republic. He thanked the Vice-Chancellor and Principal including the UNIVEN Executive Management team for believing in him and entrusted him with this role.

The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni congratulated Adv Nemukula and urged the University community to give Adv Nemukula the necessary support in his new role as Director Legal Services.

University of Venda postgraduate students are making positive change at Tshivhidzo Masiagwala Secondary School

'Make science not only fun but fashionable'

A group of young, committed, and dedicated University of Venda (UNIVEN) postgraduate students in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture took it upon themselves to mentor, tutor and make science not only fun but fashionable for Grade nine (9) learners of Tshivhidzo Masiagwala Secondary school, Maungani village. The team has been working closely with the school Principal, Mr Thilivhali Simon Sithavhakhomu and the Deputy Principal, Mr Takalani Patrick Mboneni. The purpose behind this initiative is to assist and motivate learners from rural areas to be informed more about career opportunities within the science discipline.

This group of UNIVEN postgraduate students expressed that they want to make a positive impact in rural schools and touch many lives. The group has six postgraduate student scientists: Mr Lutendo Ndou, Mr Hilton Shibambu, Ms Tanganedzani Tshitavhe, Ms Teresa Madilonga, Ms Milliscent Tshidumo and their leader, Dr Joshua Edokpayi, a UNIVEN Lecturer in the Department of Earth Sciences.

This group is part of the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve (VBR) Youth Network and are running a programme called Mini-Habitable Planet Workshop (Mini-HPW). Mini-HPW is a six-month programme under the Applied Centre for Climate Change and Earth Systems Science (ACCESS). ACCESS is an Institution under the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) running a programme for integrated research and education, services, and training within the field of Earth Systems Science (ESS). The main aim of this Mini-HPW is to encourage learners to pursue science related subjects and careers, encourage black females in science disciplines, improve learners class performance through tutorials and give them a basic introduction to the emerging interdisciplinary field of Earth Systems Science. The programme highlights reasons why planet Earth is habitable, special,

and unique. This is done through lectures, field trips, science clubs, a whole load of fun and educational videos. Members of the group are Honours degree graduates from the UNIVEN's Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, who are passionate and uphold the conservancy of the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve.

The Mini-HPW's important aspects include: a sustained six-months engagement with a school(s) through a science club, in which learners are encouraged to make measurements of their local environment and find out unique and special things about their region; a weeklong Mini-HPW workshop during June/July (Midyear) recess in which learners find out how the Earth Science System works and why their local area is special; the teaching is conducted in various ways, but in a simplified and educational manner while serving the purpose of developing interest of science into the learners.

The dedicated Planetears Alumni introduced the Grade 9s to a simple DIY (Dolt-Yourself) demonstration of density using salt, tap water and eggs. The learners were thrilled about this experiment and expressed their desire for more science practical based project. The team also indicated that they want to show the learners that science is fun, easy and can be enjoyed when understood hence they are using simple science based practical for learners to have a better understanding.

The programme is partially funded by ACCESS, through the Department of Science and Technology and the National Research Foundation. The team is seeking more funding to smoothly run the programme and to enable them to achieve goals and change many lives.

For more information, contact the chairperson: Mr Hilton Shibambu at 076 228 1626/ hiltonthilivhoni@gmail.com



Some of the group members teaching Grade 9 learners of Tshivhidzo Masiagwala Secondary



Four of the six group members posing for a photo

Dr Bernard Nthambeleni advises new staff members to avoid appearing in the news for wrong reasons

On Monday, 20 September 2021, the Organisational Development and Training Unit under Human Resources Department of the University of Venda (UNIVEN) held an academic and support staff induction programme. This staff induction programme took place on Microsoft Teams and was attended by new staff members including the Executive Deans of Faculties of Management, Commerce and Law; Science, Engineering and Agriculture; Humanities, Social Sciences and Education; the Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Research and Post Graduate Studies and Directors from various directorates of the University. This programme was facilitated by Mr Esrom Phungo.



In his address when welcoming new staff members, the Vice-Chancellor, and Principal Dr Bernard Nthambeleni highlighted that, induction of newly appointed staff members is important because it helps to acclimatise new staff members to new environment. When giving the background and context of the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, Dr Nthambeleni said UNIVEN strives to be an institution that has impact and influence, which is productive, efficient and effective as an institution of higher learning. He went further explaining the UNIVEN operating model where he advised staff members to put this model at the centre as a guide towards achieving the University's objectives. "This model places faculties at the centre, so all staff members have equal responsibilities of supporting these academic faculties."

"As a University, we should by all means avoid appearing in the news for wrong reasons. Let us value our University by showing our existence and visibility through research and infrastructure development." Dr Nthambeleni advised attendees to always strive to save and maintaining the University's infrastructure and this goes to staff and students. "UNIVEN is not a University for a region but a University of our country, continent and for the whole world." He welcomed new staff members and told them to contribute towards the University's exciting journey.

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DVC Teaching and Learning, Prof Jan Crafford said the purpose of his presentation was to give direction about the academic sphere's new vision and mission. He said UNIVEN strives to lead in engaged scholarship. Prof Crafford told new staff members that they have joined the University at the time of unprecedented changes. He said UNIVEN has the new 2021-2025 Strategic Plan; new academic structure; new executive structure; new operating model; new models of teaching, learning and assessment; and Entrepreneurial Culture.

"New teaching and learning model under 2021-2025 strategic plan demand student centricity, student support, student success and student graduating on time (entrepreneurial thinking, intercultural competency, competitive). COVID-19 pandemic has changed teaching and learning forever. Student support remains very important, especially at entry level. We need to be careful in terms of how we allocate financial resources."

"COVID-19 pandemic has changed teaching and learning forever. Student support remains very important, especially at entry level."

He told attendees that Universities are ranked according to research output, and UNIVEN has five research niche areas being African Heritage, Earth Systems and the Environment, Sustainable Engaged scholarship and students should be active participants if we are serious about being an engaged scholarship institution. "However, UNIVEN has immensely contributed to the uplifting the local communities," he concluded.

Head: HR Planning, Staffing, Remuneration and Benefits, Mr Victor Sigama presented about the Human Resource Benefits and Processes. He spoke about recruitment support, benefits and administration. Mr Sigama said the purpose of employee benefits are to attract and retain staff members, increase economic security of staff and branding by making UNIVEN an employer of choice. Amongst other things Mr Sigama spoke about Membership to the

University provident fund and administration processes, medical aid schemes, withdrawal benefits, bonus provision, leave, remission of tuition and boarding fees and long service awards.

Head of Organisational Development and Training, Mr Esrom Phungo presented about the performance management at UNIVEN. In his presentation, Mr Phungo said it is the responsibility of all staff members to make sure that what they do on daily basis is in line with what the University strives to achieve. He said his section deals with Work Integrated Learning, learnerships and internships. "We also deal with NGAP programme, making sure that we work closely with DVC Teaching and Learning to ensure that the NGAP Lecturers complete their qualifications on time." Amongst other things, the Organisational Development and Training office is responsible for organisational performance management system. Mr Phungo said the performance management system is important because the University uses it to measure the rate of success and failure in achieving the University's strategic objectives.



Andre Viljoen from Careways presented on the Employee Wellness Programme. Mr Viljoen spoke about confidential, individual support; Short term solution-focused and personal work-related problems while Advocate Rudzani Makhema presented about Employee Relations Processes and Procedures including code of conduct.

Ms Annah Matodzi, Head: Reference Services presented Library Services and Procedures. She said services offered at the library include professional services, information consulting, expert searches, information retrieval, research support such as using software like Turnitin. "Library offers database training and acquisitions of books at request," She concluded.

Ms Maggie Hlungwane from Campus Clinic representing Head of Campus Health, Ms Faith Mashau presented on Campus Health Services and Procedures while Ms Tshilidzi Shirinda, Media and Sound Broadcasting Officer representing the Director Marketing, Branding and Communication, Dr Takalani Dzaga, presented about Marketing, Branding and Communication Services and Procedures. Ms Shirinda mentioned the importance of adhering to the University Corporate Identity manual for the enhancement of UNIVEN brand.

Mr Tinyiko Sibiya, Risk Officer in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal presented about awareness and management of risks at UNIVEN. Mr Sibiya presented internal audit and risk management structure, the risk assessment and enterprise risk management process. Mr Sibiya presented the types of risks that all staff members should be aware of. He concluded his presentation by informing the attendees about the availability of Fraud and Whistleblowing toll free numbers which is 0800 212 755. He said staff and students or anyone can also send an email on anonymity to univenhotline@tip-offs.com.

Finance services and procedures were presented by Ms Tshilidzi Ramulondi, Manager Income. Ms Ramulondi made a presentation about important services offered by Finance including requisitions, application for transfer of funds, application for use of university transport, application for travelling, subsistence and incidental claims (S&T), general claim form and application for petty cash.

Mr Botwe Kraziya, the University CFO made a short presentation on Finance, where he highlighted the University's reliance on government funding through the block grant and NSFAS funding. Mr Kraziya mentioned the problem of student debt as a concern because it contributes to the University's financial wellbeing. He stated that "these students need our help to fund their studies and the University need to find ways to assist them to fund their studies." He added: "We are changing the way we interact with staff and students to ensure that there is a smooth running of the University". Mr Kraziya said the University is in the process of appointing a few key staff members in Finance who will assist in the running of the University. The CFO welcomed the attendees to the University and wished them well in their careers.

Mr Azwifaneli Mudzwari from UNIVEN Supply Chain Management unit of Finance Department presented on the supply chain management processes and procurement processes of the University. He also presented about procurement, assets, stores and transport units/sections.

The induction programme was concluded by Mr Maanda Nemaxwi from Protection Services Department who presented about Protection Services and Procedures. He said the Protection Services Department strives to protect students, staff members and the property of the University.

"We are changing the way we interact with staff and students to ensure that there is a smooth running of the University".

Limpopo Impala Cricket delegation visits UNIVEN to assess status of cricket administration and the available cricket facility



Limpopo Impala Cricket delegation with Sport & Recreation Unit staff members and two UNIVEN students (cricket players) at the newly built cricket practice facility

On Monday, 30 August 2021, the delegation from Limpopo Impala Cricket visited Sport and Recreation Unit of the University of Venda (UNIVEN). The reason for this visit was to assess the status of cricket administration and the available cricket facility at UNIVEN. This meeting took place at UNIVEN Student Centre Boardroom.



Coordinator of Sport and Recreation Unit, Mr Patrick Thaba gave an overview of Sport and Recreation Unit operations and indicated that the Unit is comprised of 3 Sections. This Unit is responsible for Strategic Objective number one (01) which is to enhance student well-being and success. "We can only grow from here taking into consideration that we are already on the right path. We have several sporting codes including cricket, soccer, volleyball. This Unit is also responsible for Arts and Culture and Community engagement. Mr Thaba further indicated that UNIVEN is an affiliated USSA member in good standing. The University's Cricket team has also affiliated with USSA and will be participating in the upcoming USSA competitions. He concluded his talk by highlighting some of the Unit's challenges with regards to shortage of sporting facilities. Mr Thaba invited sponsors to donate sporting facilities because these facilities will keep students and learners from the surrounding communities away from streets and prevent them from participating in criminal activities, abuse of alcohol, and drugs. We hope that this will be a fruitful relationship between UNIVEN and Limpopo Impala Cricket."

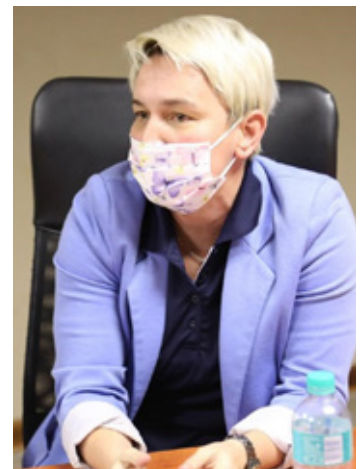


Mr Tshepo Mangena, Cricket Services Manager at Limpopo Impala Cricket highlighted that they encourage partnerships because that is the other way of realising quicker growth. He said it is good that this University already has strategies on how to get to where they want to be. Mr Mangena also encouraged Sport and Recreation Unit to be transparent in everything they do. "Limpopo Impala Cricket encourages participation from grassroots level. Children at pre-school should also be invited and be taught or invited to participate in these sporting activities."

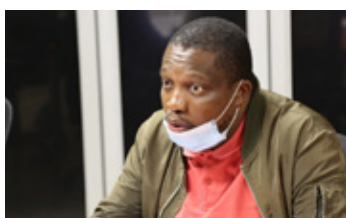
"It gives pleasure to hear that the University also allows the surrounding communities to use its sporting facilities. We need to start having pre-school sporting tournaments. We are willing to assist where you need guidance. Our door is always open for assistance when you need it but with regards to cricket."



Ms Divya George from Limpopo Impala Cricket said Cricket South Africa (CSA) is very clear and serious about the administration of cricket clubs and the UNIVEN Sport and Recreation Unit should take that into consideration if they want their club to be recognised by Cricket South Africa. "Make sure that your administration is on par. We want our professional national players to come from this province. Let us groom our own players who will represent our province at national level." Ms George advised that students should start taking cricket sporting code seriously if they want to make it in this career. She further advised the UNIVEN Sport and Recreation Unit to also put focus on female players, invite our girls to also play or practice cricket because the country also need female cricket players.



Ms Natasha Louw thanked the delegation from Limpopo Impala Cricket for the visit and mentioned that she hopes that this relationship with Limpopo Impala Cricket will bear fruitful results.



According to UNIVEN Sports Officer, Mr Ambrose Mogashoa, the reason for this visit was also to show Limpopo Impala Cricket delegation the newly built cricket practice infrastructure that was built to afford students and surrounding community members an opportunity to practice on daily basis.



A group photo of attendees of the meeting

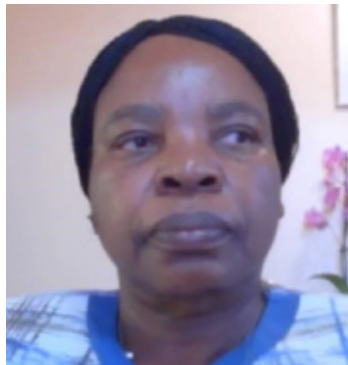


UNIVEN Sports Administrator, Dr Ndiafhi Mugwedi was the facilitator of the meeting. The delegation also visited the sport field where students will be practicing cricket.

Limpopo Impala Cricket is a Limpopo based cricket federation responsible to provide oversight cricket administration within the province.

Provision for Support to Students Living with Disability is not a One Size Fits All

The University of Venda's Disabled Student Unit (DSU) organised the 2021 Disability Indaba under the theme 'Access is a key to Academic Success'. The Indaba took place on Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 09 September 2021. This was for the second time the University celebrating Disability Indaba under difficult conditions due to COVID-19.



The Head of DSU, Dr Tshifhiwa Mbuvha when talking about the purpose of the Indaba, gave a comprehensive explanation of the Unit and services offered. Dr Mbuvha indicated that the purpose of the gathering was informed by policy framework and legislations of the Republic of South Africa. Section 29(1) of the Constitution provides that "Everyone has the right (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education, and (b) to further education, which the state through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible." These include the Employment Equity Act that emphasise Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000). Also, the National Plan for Higher Education (2000) obliges universities to increase access for learners with special needs. She said the University of Venda is following the acts of the Republic by making programmes accessible to students with disabilities.

Under the theme "Access is a key to academic success", the following sub-topics were tackled: Access to teaching and learning; Environmental access and financial access.

Disability Indaba aimed at raising awareness on disabilities and deepens the understanding on issues such as access and academic success in South African Higher Education. It also aimed to bring together a range of scholars from various disciplines and students with and without disabilities.

"We cannot talk about access and success and not mention provision of reasonable accommodation to address disability in the Institution of Higher Learning", says Dr Mbuvha. A reasonable accommodation is an adjustment made in a system to accommodate or make fair the same system for an individual based on a proven need. She added "as the Disability Unit, we provide reasonable accommodation by giving extra time to students who cannot complete test and exams at the same pace as other students due to their disabilities. Online courses, alternate testing environment, learning materials in alternative formats, scribe for exams, sign language interpreters and provision of assistive devices are reasonable accommodation that we provide to our students with disabilities. All these provisions are determined on a case-to-case basis since these cannot be one shoe fits all strategies".



"The Integrated National Disability Strategy White Paper of 1997, correctly opined that the yardstick by which to measure a "society's respect for human rights, to evaluate the level of its maturity and its generosity of spirit, is by looking at the status that it accords to those members of society who are most vulnerable, disabled people, the senior citizens and its children", these were the words by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Venda, Dr Bernard Nthambeleni when welcoming the attendees of the 2021 Disability Indaba.

He further said, "It is further stated in the White Paper that the concept of a caring society is strengthened and deepened when we recognise that disabled people enjoy the same rights as we do and that we have a responsibility towards the promotion of their quality of life".

Dr Nthambeleni indicated that in the education sector, the term access typically refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education.

He demonstrated that at the University of Venda, we strive to widen access to all students regardless of their material condition or disability status. All students who meet the admission requirements criteria are accepted in their preferred programme without discrimination based on their disability's status.

The position of UNIVEN as part of widening access to students with disabilities, has established the Disabled Student Unit to offer targeted academic support to students with various disabilities. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal mentioned that our Disabled Student Unit is staffed with experts with diverse qualification backgrounds. Their sole mandate is to provide academic support and research assistive devices that are fit to the student's individual educational needs. "It is our view and belief that "one size fits all" strategies cannot work for students with disabilities".

With regards to the progress in terms of the Assistive devices, Dr Nthambeleni informed the audience that the first batch of assistive devices were handed over to 33 NSFAS students living with disabilities on 18 March 2021 and the second batch were handed over to 64 NSFAS students living with disabilities on 08 September 2021.

He further mentioned that the University also caters for students with challenges in transportation by purchasing an adapted bus that is user-friendly for wheelchair users.

In his conclusion, he highlighted that physical environment sends powerful non-verbal messages regarding the campus climate. Furthermore, the way a University responds to accessibility issues can communicate a message of tolerance rather than embracing differences and diversity.



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment – University of Johannesburg (UJ), Prof Daniel Mashao graced the 2021 Disability Indaba by giving a presentation which was an eye opener and made the audience to think out of the box as he shared ideas regarding the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) and disability. He spoke under the topic '4IR and access to education and opportunities for students with disabilities.

Prof Mashao started his presentation by explaining what the 4IR is. He said it is the fusion of technologies for generating new cyber technologies, business models and values. He indicated that these technologies are not necessarily new, they have been there before, and they have probably gone through their cycle.

Prof Mashao displayed how 4IR is impacting us in our daily life and the speed of change.

Citing from K. Schwab, 2013, Prof Mashao said 'we stand on the brink of technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another. In its scale, scope, and complexity, the transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before. We do not yet know just how it will unfold, but one thing is clear, the response to it must be integrated and comprehensive, involving all stakeholders of the global polity, from the public and private sectors to academic and civil society'.

In his talk, he referred disability as any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them. Prof Mashao highlighted some of the disabilities which are vision, movements, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, mental health and social relationships.

Prof Mashao indicated that the previous revolutions had enabled us to create tools that are outside ourselves, but with 4IR we can become part of the tool. He said solutions to access education and opportunities are: Artificial intelligence, Data science, Block chains and Virtual reliability or Augmented reality.

Prof Mashao said the best tool to deal with disability is the smartphone or laptops.

As he wrapped up his talk, he said the 4IR offers exciting opportunities to change, and enhance ourselves. "We need research and involvement to solve long term challenges", concluded Prof Daniel Mashao.

"We need research and involvement to solve long term challenges"



Representing students living with disability the Chairperson of DSC, Mr Hanyani Maswanganyi alluded to the fact of access to funding and challenges for students living with disability which is a thorn issue. He encouraged UNIVEN management to always give this a priority.



When proposing a vote of thanks, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, Prof Jan Crafford commended the DSU led by Dr Mbuvha for hosting such a successful 2021 Disability Indaba.



The attendees were welcomed by the Disability Unit Library Liaison Officer, Mr Azwitamisi Gadisi.



The programme was facilitated by the Director Marketing, Branding and Communication, Dr Takalani Dzaga.

UNIVEN - MMSEZ host a successful Staff-Student Smart City Symposium

On Friday, 17 September 2021 the University of Venda (UNIVEN) in collaboration with Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone hosted a successful Staff/Student virtual Smart City Symposium. This was a continuation and the summing up of the main Smart City Symposium that took place at UNIVEN Research Conference Centre on Thursday, 16 September 2021.

The UNIVEN-MMSEZ Smart City Model Symposium is a culmination of the memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on 10 February 2021 between the UNIVEN represented by Dr Bernard Nthambeleni, Vice-Chancellor and Principal and Musina Makhado Special Economic Zone (MMSEZ), represented by Mr Lehlogonolo Masoga, the CEO of MMSEZ.



The Staff-Student Smart City Symposium was officially opened by the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture, Prof. Ntebogeng Mokgalaka-Fleischmann. Prof. Mokgalaka-Fleischmann started her talk by reflecting on what transpired on day one of the main symposium which was attended by high-profile stakeholders from public and private sectors.

In her remarks, Prof. Mokgalaka-Fleischmann highlighted that UNIVEN has adopted a new path '2021-2025 Strategic Plan' envisioning UNIVEN to be a leading University in 'engaged scholarship' and the University recognises four major actors in the innovation system: science, policy, industry, and society, to which UNIVEN wants to contribute. "We understand our role as a University and we know that as a University we should not only be knowledge producers, but co-creators, enablers and incubators of innovators and entrepreneurs in the national economic ecosystem". She put more emphasis on the importance of rural communities to retain their cultural identity and they must be included in co-creation of the smart villages and provided with digital skills to be active citizens connected to the smart cities. She also touched on the fact that Limpopo Province is largely a rural environment.

She said the Symposium draws on staff, students, and stakeholders' experts on smart cities to share their knowledge and expertise in respect of further shaping and galvanising the implantation of an appropriate and context driven and relevant MMSEZ Smart City Model.

The staff/student symposium received several interesting presentations on smart city technologies where mentors who have been coaching and mentoring students in the lecturing environment, laboratory environment as well as the communities at the industry, presented several projects that they have done with their students on smart city technologies. "We are looking at the major drivers of change going to the future and the 4IR. The Smart City project is about intergenerational concept. This is something we need to embrace as we cannot do away with. The symposium comes at the right time when we need to collaborate in exchanging experiences and views in relation to smart city technologies".



During the panel discussions, staff and students presented on three thematic subtopics: Smart Energy and Materials Panel moderated by Prof. Bongani Bantwini – Executive Dean, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education; Smart Health and Living Panel was moderated by Prof. Tshilidzi Mulaudzi, Acting Executive Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences; and Smart Mobility and Transport Panel which was finally moderated by the programme Director, Mr Tendai Gondo who is attached to the Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

The first panel discussion on Smart Energy and Material received four presentations.

The first presentation on Near Zero Energy Building Envelopes as a Solution for Energy Supply in Smart City, was led by Dr Eric Maluta, Department of Physics at UNIVEN.

The Second presentation on Green Synthesis of Nanomaterials and Utilisation: Towards a Sustainable Smart City, the group was led by Lutendo Mathomo from Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, UNIVEN.

This was followed by a third group which was led by Dr Evison Bhebhe who presented on Smart Organic Waste Management: Converting Waste into Black Soldier Fly *Hermetia Illucens* (Linnaeus) Larvae Protein and Organic Fertiliser. Members of the group are within the Department of Animal Science as well as Centre for Invasion Biology, UNIVEN.

Dr David Tinarwo as the leader of the fourth group from the Department of Physics, presented on Development pathways toward smart villages: Potential role of Biogas Technology in the Context of South Africa.



The Second Session on Smart Health and Living moderated by Prof. Tshilidzi Mulaudzi, Acting Executive Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, with four presentations: Exploring the provision of early antenatal care at local primary health care facilities in Limpopo province, led by Rhulani Shinyawane. Group members are from the following Departments: Public Health and Advance Nursing; Intersections of spatial (in)justice and smart cities - led by Ms Mmbulani Khwashaba, Department of Urban and Regional Planning; The prospects of using tourism industry to advance community livelihoods in Musina municipality, Limpopo Province, South Africa was led by Azwindini Isaac Ramaano, Department of Geography and Geo-Information Sciences; and Cognitive processes mediating behavioural and attitudinal responses to South Africa's Water Stress: Insights Based on the Augmented Protective Motivation Theory was led by Diko-Makia. Members of the group for this presentation are from the Department of Earth Sciences, University of Venda, and Centre for Student Counseling and Development, University of Limpopo.

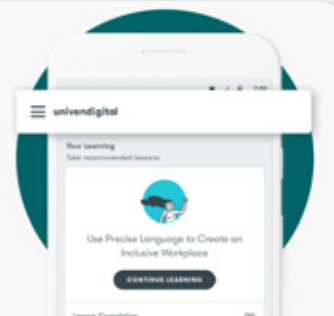


The last Session on Smart Mobility and Transport which was moderated by Mr Tendai Gondo, received only one presentation led by Mr Lutendo Mawelewele. The presentation was on Application of the smart governance approach in sustainable rural-urban transport linkages in small towns of South Africa. Group members are from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at UNIVEN.



In her closing remarks UNIVEN's Director of Community Engagement, Prof. Vhonani Netshandama said from the four faculties of UNIVEN, with our collective and collaborative efforts, we will be solving the problems that communities are faced with. She appreciated the leadership of the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture for this enormous milestone. Most importantly, the students across faculties who participated in this programme that contributed by way of comments and papers. She indicated that this is one of many conversations that we are going to have if we are going to be active partners to this initiative. The symposium has been a learning platform and a platform for us to begin to support one another in reimagining the future of the smart city we want. She reminded the audience that part of the reason is that we are beginning to look at and realise our journey towards what we set out on the strategic plan, that is we are going to strengthen our engagement and partnerships. "We are going to make sure that we strengthen our trans-disciplinary research and initiatives. When we interrogate, let us not be limited by our own understanding of what knowledge is as if what we do not know is not important. Let it be the source of inspiration and our need to work with one another so that we can make a contribution which is impactful and intergenerational," added Prof. Netshandama. She indicated that Smart City is not going to happen overnight. Therefore, there is a need to develop things which are fit for purpose.

As she concluded, she said this shows that there is internal conversation about how we see ourselves within this big project of smart city technologies.



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UNIVEN PhD graduate finds his way to Stanford University



Dr Chakafana at Stanford University School of Medicine in California

Dr Graham Chakafana, a Protein Biochemist who is a University of Venda (UNIVEN) graduate, has recently secured a postdoctoral fellowship position at Stanford University School of Medicine, in the United States of America. His research focuses on the role of proteins in signalling pathways associated with the progression of diseases. Proteins are major drug targets, hence the work that he does interfaces with intervention efforts against diseases. Dr Chakafana grew up in Masvingo, located in the southern region of Zimbabwe.

"I knew right from my time in high school that I wanted to pursue a career in Life Sciences. Upon completing high school, I enrolled for an undergraduate degree in Biotechnology at the Chinhoyi University of Technology before proceeding to pursue a Master's degree in Microbiology at the National University of Science and Technology. During my MSc training, I was privileged to participate in a World Health Organisation (WHO)-led study that investigated the proficiency of molecular techniques used for human papillomavirus (HPV) diagnosis. I was subsequently awarded the MSc with distinction and I also received several awards for graduating as the best student in the Faculty of Science," he said.

Dr Chakafana further said that, few months after completing his MSc, he moved to South Africa to pursue PhD in Protein Biochemistry at the University of Venda under the mentorship of Prof Addmore Shonhai and Dr Tawanda Zininga. He said that he specifically joined the Protein Biochemistry and Malaria (ProBioM) research group which was led by Prof Shonhai. ProBioM mostly focuses on the role of heat shock proteins in the development and pathogenicity of malaria. "Some aspects of my PhD work were conducted at the Protein Structure and Function Research Unit (PSFRU) based at the University of the Witwatersrand. Joining ProBioM was the defining moment in my career. I was privileged to receive a grant holder bursary to support my studies through a grant awarded to Prof. Shonhai by the Germany Research Foundation (DFG)."

In addition, he was also awarded support by the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa. "Overall, my PhD journey had a lot of ups and downs, as any PhD student would testify. At some point, I felt like quitting my PhD. Scientific research is not an easy undertaking especially when acquisition of new skills is an essential part of the study project. However, the skills that I mastered under my PhD mentors' guidance have proved priceless." It only occurred to me that I had acquired important skills right towards the end of my PhD study.

He explained that, in 2018, a team of experts from BioNavis, a Finland based company that specialises in making analytical equipment to study intermolecular interactions visited their lab (UNIVEN Lab) and he managed to gain hands on training in Surface Plasmon Resonance (SPR) based analysis. SPR is a cutting-edge technique widely used in studying protein-protein/ligand interactions. The generation of quality data was central to the work that we used to conduct in the ProBioM research group. This instilled in me a work ethic of focus and hard work.

Just after submitting his PhD thesis, he was offered a position at the Cape Heart Institute (CHI) within the Department of Medicine at the University of Cape Town where he worked under the mentorship of Prof Karen Sliwa, who at that time was the President of the World Heart Federation (WHF). At CHI, he managed to author several articles relating to COVID-19 and cardiovascular disease with some leaders of the WHF. Some of this work has been listed on the World Health Organisation (WHO) website as recommended reads.

Dr Chakafana graduated his PhD in Biochemistry in September 2020 at the University of Venda. In March 2021, he was invited to an interview for a Postdoctoral Research Scientist position in Cardiovascular Proteomics with Stanford University in California, USA. He said the interviewers requested him to present a summary of the PhD research work which he conducted at the University of Venda. He then contacted

his PhD mentors who were happy to assist him with preparations for his interview. "I am extremely grateful for the coaching provided by both Prof Shonhai and Dr Zininga in preparation for my interview. A few months down the line, I landed in the Silicon Valley to begin my new position at Stanford University. My stint at the University of Venda was indeed crucial in deciding my current career trajectory."

He said at Stanford University, he will apply his skills in protein biochemistry to study the role of signalling proteins in the development of heart failure. The ultimate goal of this research is the identification and development of novel drug interventions against heart failure. Given that cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death globally (accounting for approximately 32% of all deaths), this research has potentially far-reaching practical applications. "This motivates me to commit my attention to this noble and rewarding area of study. My experience in our humble ProBioM lab at the University of Venda has taught me that great science can happen anywhere. The training I received during my PhD opened doors for me at an international stage and now I am privileged to be working at one of the best labs in the world."

"The University of Venda has a warm and friendly culture. At UNIVEN, I made lifetime friends who turned into extended family. The staff within the Biochemistry Department also deserve special mention for their unwavering support towards student learning and progress."

"Martin Luther King once said 'If you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl. Whatever you do, move forward'. Nobody wants hurdles in life, we all want things to go smooth. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has placed a hurdle for research. My advice to graduate students affected by COVID-19 would be to do the best you can under these not so conducive circumstances. One day COVID-19 will end but, in the meantime, do something."



The HoD of Biochemistry Department in the faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture Prof Addmore Shonhai, said he is excited to follow that his former student, Dr. Graham Chakafana was offered a postdoctoral position at the prestigious, ivy league institution, Stanford University. "To train a student who moves on to join Silicon Valley is the dream of anyone doing the job I do in this humble setting! It was a pleasure to guide Graham during his PhD study. He is hard-working and focussed. His career progress serves as an inspiration to UNIVEN students that nothing stands in their way towards realising their career goals.

Furthermore, Graham's career achievement further helps us to debunk the notation that previously disadvantaged institutions produce sub-standard products. To secure the position at Stanford University, Graham presented his PhD work. I had the privilege to assist him organise his presentation for the interview. It is encouraging to note that he was recruited based on the strength of the work he did here at UNIVEN. As someone who closely followed his recruitment by Stanford University, I am convinced that he is not going to this ivy institution only to receive but goes there as a UNIVEN emissary on mission to share skills in Proteomics and Protein Biochemistry that he gained back at this institution."

Martin Luther King once said 'If you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl. Whatever you do, move forward'.



Dr Chakafana presenting a poster in January 2019 at the Biophysics workshop held in Cape Town.



Dr Chakafana at Stanford University Hospital in California

Webinar on Child Marriages addresses an African Family Pandemic in the Midst of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic

The Department of Mercantile and Private Law, under the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law of the University of Venda held a Webinar on Child Marriages: An African Family Pandemic in the Midst of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic. This was a thought-provoking topic addressed by relevant experts. The Webinar took place on Thursday, 09 September 2021.



The Head of Department of Mercantile and Private Law, Prof Anthony Nwafor introduced the concept of the webinar as being to explore reasons for child marriages in Africa, the consequences of child marriages and to proffer solutions to this family and societal malady.



The first presenter, Mr Dewa Mavhinga, the Southern African Regional Director at Human Rights Watch, dissected the topic from his over two decades of empirical research and experience on issues of human and child's rights. He identified three major drives behind child marriages in Africa.

The first is that of religious practice, which he referred to as "church doctrine". He revealed that in many Christian church denominations, the "church doctrine" of forcing young girls from ages 12-16 to marry, is actively professed. The rationale for this practice is attributed to ensuring that girls marry as virgins, and to prevent sex outside the context of marriage.

The second major drive is founded on cultural practices. He stated that the primordial patriarchal practices and the notion of women as objects of sex persist in many African nations. Cultural practices that place a high premium on the sexual purity of the bride, force girls at a tender age to be married off. There is a stereotyping of young girls coming of age that they would not be able to keep themselves pure in relations with boys, hence they are given out in marriages. He described such practices as biased and unfair treatment of the girl child as boys who become sexually active at tender ages are not subjected to the same treatment.

The third major cause of child marriage in Africa as highlighted in the presentation is directly linked to poverty. The girl child is seen as a commodity to be sold to alleviate the family's financial needs. He lamented that receiving a bride-price in a time where Covid-19 has wrecked financial havoc on many families, has become an even greater incentive than ever before in history as the education of the girl child is sacrificed for the temporary financial relief she could secure to the family through marriage.

Mr Mavhinga emphasised that all these three indefensible causes are systemic and require a change of mindset and conviction in communities. He concluded by referring to the African Charter of 1990 that prescribes the minimum age for child marriage as 18 years and urged that the charter prescription should be observed by the communities.



Ms Mundia Situmbeko, from an NGO called Girls Not Brides, which is based in London and has an African office in Nairobi. Her research findings on genderbased violence and matters such as female genital mutilation and child marriage, have been used to advise African national governments in addressing issues of gender equality and formulation of national and UN policies on child marriages.

In her presentation, Ms Situmbeko sought to provide a plausible answer to the question as to whether the Covid-19 pandemic is reversing the gains previously made to minimise and eradicate child marriages in Africa. The affirmative response to this question was attributed to the aggravated level of poverty spun on many families by the Covid-19 pandemic through loss of livelihoods thus prompting the giving out of the girl child in marriage to alleviate poverty.

Ms Situmbeko pointed to the unsettling and glaring truth that child marriages are essentially a gender issue. Girls are the victims and pay an inhumane price. Some cultures precede child marriage with another appalling and most humiliating practice, that of virginity testing, again targeting defenceless girls only. She described such obnoxious practices embedded in culture as violations of the rights of the girl child.

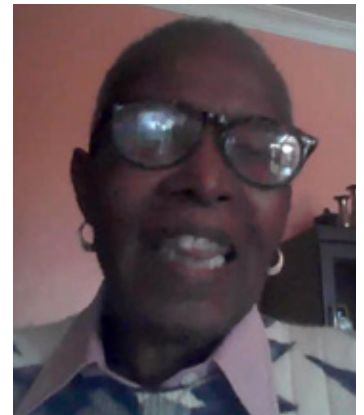
As a global issue, Ms Situmbeko advocated concerted global action against child marriages. She stressed that addressing the symptoms alone would not suffice, the society must change this grievous prejudicial attitude towards the girl child. Girls should be allowed to develop and mature like boys, given the same protection in their families and their dignity upheld under the law.



As the last presenter, Dr Admark Moyo who heads the Children and Law programme at the African Child Forum in Addis Ababa alluded to the progress made across the African region to eradicate such practices and to channel efforts towards educational and social development of the girl child. He emphasised that the minimum age for marriage is 18 years and that this is enshrined in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) as ratified by many African nations, and other national instruments. He said that requirement is non-negotiable as marriage being a very serious commitment demands some level of maturity.

Dr Moyo observed that the requirement in some national instruments for parental consent to child marriage constitutes an infringement on the right of the child. Parental consent to child marriage abnegates the child's independent legal existence. He advocated the repeal of such laws where they exist. Dr Moyo continued to express that Laws alone whether embedded in treaties, conventions, policies and other national instruments are simply not sufficient to eradicate the incidences of child marriages and their inimical effects on the development of the child. He said the solution lies in a holistic transformative approach to child development especially the girl child.

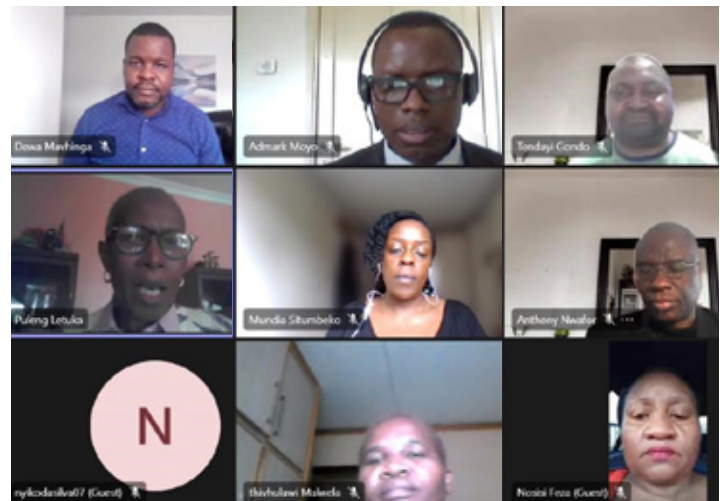
During the questions and answers session towards the end of the webinar, the participants, who were in large numbers, received informed answers on all the questions put to the three speakers.



In her closing remarks, Mrs Puleng Letuka observed that child marriage severely and inimically has impact on children's lives, their health and well-being. It truncates their education, retards the physical and emotional development of the child, leads to unprepared pregnancies and motherhood, and advised that this gospel should be extended to the rural communities where issues of child marriages are still rampant. She expressed gratitude to the presenters and the organisers of the programme and declared the programme as closed.



The Executive Dean of the Faculty of Management, Commerce and Law, Prof Modimowabarwa Kanyane welcomed the audience and encouraged them to participate and engage with the speakers.

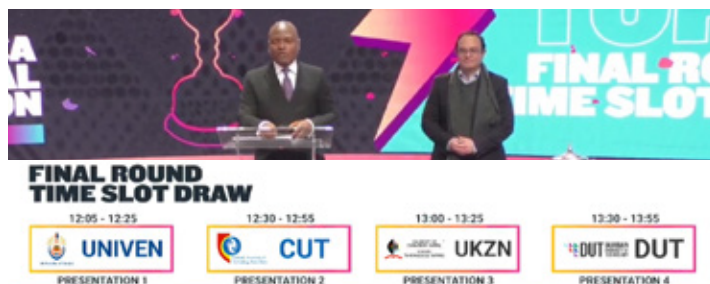


Enactus UNIVEN emerges fourth place out of 12 participating Universities during 2020-2021 National Enactus Competition

Enactus UNIVEN has recently emerged 4th place during the 2020/2021 National Enactus Competition. During this competition, students from various universities apply business concepts to develop entrepreneurial projects, that transform the lives of people from the communities, and find solutions to the challenges in those communities. This National Enactus Competition took place virtually on YouTube.



Trophies that the Enactus UNIVEN Team won during the competition



Top 4 teams in Final round



Top 12 teams that successfully made it into the semi-finals of the competition

UNIVEN team competed with Green-Life project. This project is a life changing project that focuses on promoting sustainable commercial farming on healthy crops, protecting water streams, ensuring quality water and advocating for soil and aquatic animals, the project is in support of sustainable development goals and objectives of National Development Plan 2023/2030.

The UNIVEN Enactus team won two trophies both in first place, Nedbank Triple Bottom Line Sustainability and Harmony Entrepreneurship and Business Solutions, respectively. Enactus team topped league 3 to reach the Final round.

It was during this round when Enactus UNIVEN emerged position four (04) out of twelve (12) participating universities during annual Enactus South Africa National Competition.

Enactus UNIVEN team President, Faranani Mabada appreciated the support that the University has continued to give Enactus UNIVEN team. "We thank the Faculty Advisors, Directorate of Community Engagement, Institute for Rural Development and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Corporate Services and other stakeholders within Vhembe Biosphere."

Dr Lufuno Grace Mavhandu-Ramarumo selected for the 6th BRICS Young Scientist Forum



Dr Lufuno Mavhandu-Ramarumo

Dr Lufuno Grace Mavhandu-Ramarumo has been selected to participate in the 6th BRICS Young Scientist Forum under the sub-theme 'Healthcare'. This Forum will be held virtually from 13-16 September 2021.

Dr Mavhandu-Ramarumo is exploring the use of a Stool Based Epidemiology (SBE) surveillance system for tracking COVID-19 trends in communities in South Africa.

During the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) meeting, she will be sharing with other scientists, a proof of concept that she has developed using stool for community-based surveillance of SARS-CoV-2.

SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid is shed in stools of COVID-19 infected individuals and can be detected even when an individual does not show clinical symptoms. The collection of stools is non-invasive, relatively cheaper and consent to collect is easier to obtain as compared to nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal specimens.

Dr Mavhandu-Ramarumo completed her MSc studies at the University of Venda with training from the University of Virginia and she is the recipient of the DST-TATA Women in Science Award in the Young Scientist category in 2010. In 2014, she successfully defended her PhD thesis entitled Studies on HIV-1 subtype C drug susceptibility: Development of a phenotypic drug resistance assay and evaluation of plant-derived compounds; with mentorship from Professors Pascal Bessong and David Rekosh (University of Virginia,

USA). She is an awardee of a Thuthuka NRF research grant (2017-2023), investigating the impact of undisclosed prior use of ARV in patients starting ARV treatment; and a Self-Initiated Research Award from the South African Medical Research Council (2018-2021), investigating gut microbiota composition under antiretroviral therapy. Additionally, she has received research fellowship awards for work at the J. Craig Venter Institute, Maryland, USA, and at the Myles H. Thaler Center for AIDS and Human Retrovirus Research, Virginia, USA.

Dr Mavhandu-Ramarumo has published fifteen peer-reviewed articles on HIV drug resistance and factors impacting the sustainability of antiretrovirals, and mentors MSc and PhD students. She is currently the Scientific Manager of HIV/AIDS and Global Health Research Programme at UNIVEN, and specifically coordinates SARS-CoV-2 molecular epidemiology research and Covid-19 testing readiness activities in the AIDS Virus Research Laboratory. She reviews manuscripts for peer reviewed journals on an adhoc basis,

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Contact Details:

Tel: 015 962 8525
Fax: 015 962 8494
e-mail:
welheminah.mabogo@univen.ac.za

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